



The Auburn Circle

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Auburn's General Interest Magazine

Spring-Summer 1999

"Sweet Auburn!
Loveliest villiage
of the plain,

Where health and plenty
cheer'd
the labouring swain,

Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,

And parting summer's lingering
blooms delay'd."

—Goldsmith
The Deserted Village

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Patience.

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."

Romans 12:12

Boy that's a concept that being the Editor of a magazine will sure teach you in a hurry. What an eventful year it's been for us. I, for one, am exhausted (and I know several of my staff members and advisors share this sentiment!) But we made it, you guys. We rose above the turmoil that surrounded us to present to Auburn its gracious magazine. Against all odds, we ultimately prevailed.

I am so grateful to have had the chance to lead this publication through another year. As I look back, I can see all of the things I've learned, the people I've grown rather fond of, and the feats we have miraculously accomplished together. With graduation resting on the horizon of my college career, I prepare to step down and let another, hopefully better, editor take my place.

But back to patience. So many things in my life have circled around the concept of patience this quarter, as if God were hitting me in the head from every direction until I finally understood that patience is truly a virtue that we need in our lives. We are always rushing around in our lives trying to get everything done perfectly and immediately, and we miss out on the things that we have been put here to experience. When things go wrong, when our patience is tried, we have to stop for a moment and ask ourselves "what are we doing"? We develop our faith, and learn to trust that God will work things out for us, even when things are the bleakest. And so this is what I leave you with, Auburn, as I pack my bags and head off into the world. Never give up hope, believe that you can accomplish anything, and trust in the Father that reigns over us all.

And watch out for those floating heads! (read on to figure it out.)

Prayers, Smiles, and Forever Laughter,
Lorie Grimes

The Auburn Circle accepts work from students, staff, alumni, and supporters of the publication and University. Prose, poetry, essays, and articles should be typed. *The Auburn Circle* has access to IBM and Mac computers, but you should call for guidelines if turning in work on a disk. All artwork should be submitted as a 5x7 photograph, or as a slide. Submissions become the property of *The Auburn Circle* and will not be returned unless otherwise worked out with the Editor. *The Auburn Circle* is a community publication financed through Student Activity fees. The views expressed throughout this issue are those of the authors, not necessarily of the Editor, the Board of Student Communications, or those of *The Auburn Circle* Editorial Board and Staff.

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Finding Therapy

by Keisha Oldacre

I have this haunting, reoccurring dream that must secretly hover over my bed. The details vary, but for the most part it's the same dream about those horrible years of my life; the years that only come out in such states of unconsciousness because I have no desire to sit and think about them. They are too dark for my everyday life, hence maybe another reason why they choose to sift into my mind only during the night time hours.

Derek's faultless appearance and engineering degree didn't fool me as it did everyone else, including my mother. I hated him the very first time we met. His cunning eyes and deceitful voice gave me a deep-down feeling that wouldn't leave me. I could smell trouble radiating from every part of him. When he and my mom only dated I could deal with him, but imagine how I felt when my mother told me he would be my stepfather. I felt distraught and furious; convinced it was a mistake. At first sight I knew he was mean and conniving. I had no idea at that time however, that alcohol made him worse; but I learned. I learned how alcohol twisted his senses. I learned the terrible sound of violent arguments. As a result of the turmoil he made of my life, I learned what hatred really does to a person.

I had seen beer commercials and champagne goblets the entire eleven years of my life, but never thought anything about it. I didn't know that the smiling "cool guys" in those commercials went home ready to start a fight with anyone and everyone they loved. Not long into that unforgettable year, I found out all I never even wanted to know about alcohol. At first my mother tried to justify Derek's alcoholism to me, herself, and everyone else by explaining how he inherited it. Both my mother and Derek described his abusive set of alcoholic parents. They informed me of not only the mental abuse but also the extensive physical abuse. The abuse inflicted on him was so severe that even to this very day, I am not aware of all the details. Despite all of the "justifications" for his illness, my hate for him kept growing. I didn't care that he inherited alcoholism. I didn't care if he was trying to overcome it. After so long, "trying" wasn't enough.

My entire dream focuses completely on one particularly severe argument. The argument never changes from dream to dream; it's always the same, and thus easy for me to recall. On a scale of one to ten, where the number one constitutes a night when my mother decided

that having a fight wasn't worth inquiring about his drunkenness, and the number ten represents an argument where his actions included things such as throwing objects, kicking doors in, and hiding my mother's keys, this dream unfolds in at least a seven. I think I dream about this argument because it was the first, or at least the first that I knew about. The fight made such an impact on me because I had never seen, much less been inside of anything like it. The closest I had ever been to family problems of that magnitude occurred while watching Sunday night movies on television. The argument I witnessed that night shocked and wounded me more than anything ever had. That first taste of violence invading my home is something that never left me. Each time I awake from that awful dream, I feel shocked. It's amazing how details of even the most terrible events of one's life fade into one big picture. I believe that is why my dream is so powerful; because the details aren't blurry or altered, but instead, very vivid and real.

On this particular winter night in 1990, he drank before he drove home from the office. He tried to conceal his drunkenness but mom could smell alcohol on his breath and see the glaring in his eyes. Most of all, she could hear it in his speech. Sometimes he could mask the smell, but he could never hide his slurred speech. I think my mother waited because my ears were so sensitive to their screams and my mother's cries. I woke up to fierce yells at 2:13 in the morning and laid in my bed stiff as a board so I could hear every word. I listened to make sure my mother was safe. As long as the yelling continued, I knew she was okay; it was the silence that worried me. After so long, I gathered enough courage to tip-toe down the stairwell. Thinking back, it is funny how I, in my short and skinny eleven year-old body, actually thought that I could protect my mother from this huge, abusive man. Nevertheless, I stood in the doorway of their bedroom and tried to physically catch my mother the few times he hit or threw picture frames at her. Mostly, I could only catch her from the blaring sound of his horrid voice. I caught her in that I gave her a break from the fight. I screamed at him in place of her and desperately clung to my mother. I didn't care what I had to do; I became fearless when I sensed danger approaching her. I've always heard that God delivers extra strength in normally impossible situations and now I fully believe that.

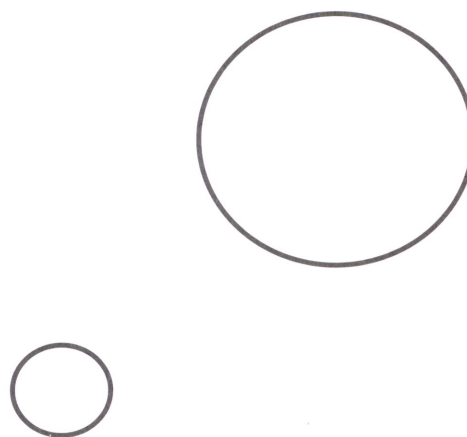
But tough as I came across in the heat of the battle, his alcoholism petrified me. I was afraid of how violent alcohol made him. Alcohol caused him to lose every ounce of sanity he maintained. He yelled and cursed the most awful things and sometimes became physically abusive. Most of my fear was for my mother because she was the target of his anger; she was the one that yelled back with all her might and then cried herself to sleep while lying next to him. After she assured me she was "okay" I retreated to my room, let down my guard, and the terrified little girl inside me flooded my pillows with big, salty tears.

During the aftermath of each painfully familiar fight, a little chip began to form inside my soul. The chip grew and hardened with every argument until it finally evolved into a tight ball of hatred, which harbored deep within my innermost core. Every single thing about Derek bred hatred in me. Whether he was sober or drunk, I absolutely hated the sight of him. I hated the fact that my mother always went back to him after his miserable apologies. My life filled with so much hate because of the wreck Derek had made of my family. I felt less comfortable in my own home than anywhere else and that was an extremely depressing feeling. As if the hatred wasn't enough, the secrecy of my family's problems repressed my feelings for so long that I could no longer bear its weight. I can't recall exactly what day, but it was somewhere at the beginning of seventh grade that I opened my notebook to write. I didn't know what I was doing or why, it was just an instinct that I followed. As I wrote, all of the hatred streamed out from my pen as I wept for the pain and, for the first time, felt relief. The poem I created certainly wouldn't win any contest, but it won freedom from my repression. Poetry soon began to channel all of my fear, vexation, and anguish into something constructive. For so long I had worried about protecting mother from Derek and her own pain, without giving a thought to my own protection. Eventually, I discovered a way to protect myself from the anger and languish that, sadly, I had grown accustomed to.

My dream always ends with me getting ready for school the morning after the fight. There's something about mornings after a rough night. The previous night still exists in one's thoughts, but at the same time, the sun shines in and reminds the weary sleeper that there is light

in the world. So I refuse to grovel in self-pity and roll myself out of bed with fresh optimism. The shower heals my senses and lifts my spirits. I pull on my cream tights, plaid wool skirt, and matching sweater. I turn the volume on my yellow jambox as high as it will go. And I sing and smile, ready to face a new day.

I am saddened to think about that part of my past, but most of all it gives me a bittersweet taste of victory and pride. I found an outlet through writing poetry that allowed me to free myself of the painful shackles Derek placed on me. Instead of becoming feeble and depressed, I rose up against the pain and amazingly overcame each obstacle. Because of Derek's disease, the violent disagreements, and my discovery of writing as therapy for my hatred, I developed from that terrified little girl into a strong, mature woman. Difficulties are inevitable in our lives; it is how we handle those difficulties that shape and mold us into the personalities we each possess. In the same way that Derek finally built an immunity to his disease, I have built strength that can confront whatever hardships come my way. While I could never forget those dreadful times, they rarely surface in my thoughts. They know my conscious mind has no use, space, or time for them. And the dream doesn't even bother me; it has actually become a quite effective reminder of how my life could be, and even inspires some of my best poetry.



We Must Appreciate Women's History

by Zachary Bovier Taylor

March was Women's History Month. Scores of people of numerous ethnicities and genders have contributed to the success of the world. To allot only one month to the Mother of the Universe is an understatement.

When Adam was the Lone Ranger in the Garden of Eden, God created a helpmate so that Adam would not be lonely. Female companionship is one of the most precious bonds that a man can have in his lifetime. The love of his mother, his sister, his cousins, his nieces, his aunts, his grandmothers, and his significant other keep him going when the world has told him that he is no good. A boy's best friend on earth is his mother. I thank God for my Godly virtuous mother, Mrs. Laverne Meredith Taylor, pursuant to Proverbs Chapter 31, King James Version.

Regardless of the attempts to have a "battle of the sexes," the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.

When Captain John Smith faced execution at the hands of the Native Americans (i.e. Indians), his princess, Pocahontas, risked her life and limb to spare him a scalping, torture, and horrible death. When Phyllis Wheatley learned to deal with the reality that she was a slave and subject to the will of her master, Wheatley continued to write poetry. This poetry encouraged her as she raised her child. Wheatley's poetry allowed her to become the first official African-American poet in the history of the United States.

Susan B. Anthony fought for women's suffrage, which became a constitutional amendment that gave women the right to vote. Females are perhaps the reason why candidates for public office make a vehement outcry on issues such as comparable pay for comparable worth. Also, not too many esteemed leaders have gotten to their pinnacle of success without the love and assistance of a woman.

Bearded Abraham Lincoln, our sixteenth President, the Great Emancipator, said, "All I am and all I hope to be, I owe to my mother." Honest Abe suffered nervous breakdowns. His childhood sweetheart died in the early part of their betrothal. He lost a child in infancy. He failed at business. He lost six elections for public office before he became President of the United States in 1860. Not too many people know that Abraham was an enlisted man long before he went to the White House. Therefore, his mother's instilling in him, "Never Give Up!" allowed the man

with one year of formal education to lead our nation to unity during the Civil War.

Douglas MacArthur applied to the United States Military Academy at West Point twice and received letters of denial twice. Young Douglas applied to West Point a third time and finally gained admission. His mother secured a residence off the Post of the West Point grounds and legend has it that Douglas MacArthur cried in his mother's arms on the weekends. However, Douglas MacArthur's persistence allowed him to become a five-star General-of-the-Army, one of only a hand full in American History. MacArthur was truthful when the distressed people of the Philippines heard him utter, "I shall return."

Rose Kennedy, the pious matriarch of the Kennedy family of Massachusetts, produced four sons who would become war heroes, United States senators, an attorney general, and the youngest person ever to win the election as President of the United States. She said in an interview for *Parade* magazine that she hoped her children had the strength to deal with the inevitable disappointments and pains of life. When someone asked her how was she able to deal with the unnatural causes of her sons' death, she was not shaken in frailty.

Patrick died in combat. John F. Kennedy died as an assassinated President. Robert died as he sought election to the Presidency. Arguably, Ted Kennedy committed political suicide.

Rose Kennedy responded that "God's eye is on the sparrow, I know that He watches over me."



Plague

by Angela Insenga

When I spilled the chocolate pudding,
I sensibly covered it
with a Little Golden Book
and went outside to mope
under the mammoth Blue Spruce
in our backyard.

There, skeletons of locusts clung
to treebark and crunched
like potato chips when
I grabbed for them.

I heard my grandmother scream
from the backdoor and knew —
the book, settled like a thin-winged moth hovering
over its prey
hadn't hid my blunder.

Later, mother droned
*"Be careful. The bugs will come if you spill things.
The bugs will come."*

In bed I imagined hundreds of
locusts zooming into our
house, devouring our couch,
our dog, and the six
remaining bowls of chocolate pudding
in the Frigidaire, each
with its own thick skin.

The bugs *would* come, tiny battalions
at war with little girls who dropped,
stopped, and ran.
Now, when I spill fruit cocktail,
mother's words rise like a swarm
in the back of my throat,
and I too want to speak
of insect armies,
and vigilante vermin.

Instead, I push the words back,
swallowing those crispy
memories that hang like clumps of locusts
caught in my throat.



Gretta Spatial, center, and her acting troupe perform "The Power of Creation" on a street in Columbia.

The Dolphin That Would Not Die

An Interview with Gretta Spatial *by Lorie Grimes*

Working for *The Auburn Circle*, you get the opportunity to meet an eclectic array of characters across the campus. Some are kind of scary, some rather humorous, and others you'd just rather not discuss. But once in a while, you run into someone who is so unique and so full of life that it adds a little extra zing to your own boring one. Gretta Spatial is one of those rare people, and she has a message for the world.

Who is she and where does she come from?

Gretta is a twenty-one year old theater major at Auburn University. Originally from Bogota, Columbia, she has a dream of opening people's eyes to their own creative talents and the true life around our everyday existence. This May, Gretta is going to get the chance to make part of her dream come true right here at Auburn University with "The Power of Creation."

Gretta's dream began long ago, even into her childhood. She was always the comedian of her family, always acting to get herself into, and out of, trouble. She found her groove in entertaining her family, friends, and all people in general. Her father was the main driving force of her family, always pushing her and her sister to do "the best, the best, the best". Both parents gave Gretta and her sister freedom to explore all of what life had to offer, and to reach deep down inside to make their dreams a reality. Gretta saw that the world needed help, and it became her dream to change that. Gretta travelled to the States on several occasions for family vacations before joining her sister, a Graphic and Commercial Designer at Jacksonville University. Gretta wanted to stay, but she needed a place to pursue her love of theater.

Why did she end up here?

She found that place while visiting a friend, at a quaint little school nestled in the peaceful plains of the Deep South - Auburn University.

Immediately she fell in love with the tranquility, for in her country, paranoia reigns as the citizens are surrounded by violence, anger, and unrest. But in this new, small town she had discovered the culture was very different and the people were able to live leisurely. For the first time, she experienced the closeness, the sense of community, of a small, country town. And she loved it. The next thing to capture her heart was the different seasons, something they do not have in Columbia. That close to the equator, the weather is either hot and wet, or hot and dry. Winter and Summer were totally new concepts.

She does miss some things about Columbia, though, after being here for seven months. She misses the Columbian artistic environment, where everything was more free and relaxed, breaking the constraints of time and stressful schedules that bind many Americans. She misses her culture's ideas of love and friendship, wherein friendship is truly love and not something related to mere drinking buddies or one night stands. A friend is someone you love, not someone you would stab in the back, or stomp all over to get what you want. Gretta comes from a place not as involved with materialism and superficiality as we are here, where everything is fast, fresh, and served with a fake smile. She has a very different perspective on our culture, being from the outside looking in, and she can see the things that we cannot. So she tries to show them to us on the stage.

Why is theater so important to Gretta?

"I believe that is a very deep and unlimited tool to create your own world when you are on the stage. You have the power to do what you want. You are competing with yourself. It takes discipline and creativity," she explains. Theater means a lot to her, and its not only a physical accomplishment on the stage, but its very spiritual for her too. Gretta's mother, a Columbian Catholic Herbatologist, instilled within her children a deep sense of spirituality, and Gretta brings it out in her work. She speaks of a poem that she wrote once about the theater and her passion for it, "Theater is like my body. My legs are the stage, my eyes are the lights, my brain is the audience." And she further explains her spiritual side when she talks of her God and says, "Jesus is a waterfall of creativity" that trickles down onto her.

So when she was offered the chance to use her passion for the theater to make her dream come true, she snatched it up and ran with it, full speed. The production is called "The Power of Creation," and it's a combination of South American and North American elements. It has evolved from words on a page into a big, bright, dancing baby play full of color, costumes, and festive makeup.

The story line goes as follows: an artist (played by Gretta) paints a picture and the subjects in her painting come out into the real world. There they learn about things like love, nature, and life. Gretta explains that "we all have an ocean inside" of creativity. The show will be performed in silent theater, with only a diversified cultural mix of music to accom-



Gretta Spatial applies makeup to one of the actors in "Power". She designed all of the makeup and costumes herself.

pany the actors. This is to "teach the audience how to listen," to the silence and to the world around them. "It's like transporting the audience to a different world," she says. Gretta is planning on having a performance at the Graves Amphitheater, as well as

a street dance and performance, as is traditional in Columbia. Many themes are touched on during the course of the play, such as the power of the planets, nature, God and religion, love, freedom, and celebrating life. The actors wear masks to symbolize the fear of breaking the creative boundaries. Everyone in society always hides behind a mask, she says, and rarely reveals who they truly are in creativity.

The Future Of Power.

The play is bound to catch the attention of many Auburn University students, when it opens the last week of May. It already has a buzz going around the Theater Department, who, at the last minute, pulled their support from under Gretta's feet. She keeps striving on, however, and has the aim to make her dream, and nine months of labor, a reality for Auburn University. Now, with her support gone, she must rely solely on her own wellspring of creativity. She has what it takes to be a star in her own right. She is turning the heads of some prospective investors from Birmingham. This summer, Gretta is taking the show on a tour around this area and Florida, where she plans on doing performances by the ocean. She wants to touch needy children with her work. Gretta is getting closer and closer to attaining her goal of travelling with "The Power of Creation" around the globe. Her dream is to change the world, and I personally believe she will.

Advice from Gretta to You.

"Don't let anyone or anything doubt about you and your dreams. Never quit and be yourself!"

The Power of Creation

by Gretta Spatial

Pushing mariners to an abstract horizon we all
Construct a personal boat full of creation.
We can sit all our time and watch how the boat is there
On top of a ladder or we can get into the boat and
Sail across everything and everyone...
The choice is in our hands, the choice is always there in front of us...
The power to create is in us, what we do for us
Is the only thing that will last.

Money come and go, but our brain is always there...
Dreams, talent this world is full of talent, but
Where is the passion? The passion of cleaning cars
The passion of drinking alcohol? The passion of doing
something that even if it is not right is made with passion.
Not like faxes and copies from the same book that have
everything, and they ask themselves why they are not happy
or why they are not advancing in the world... is because there
is everything except a passion from the soul a real passion.

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My Brain

by Mary Ferguson

"Look at this Mess!" they laughed,
While pointing to my mind.
"Someone just left it there!
A brain's been left behind!"

And on a hill in outer space
I was drifting far away.
"I know I saw it somewhere," I say
"But, where'd it go today?"

My heart is all accounted for
And tucked safely into place.
It's in a continent across the ocean,
Far away from space.

My body is right here, searching
For it's wayward center
"How so I know where to go," I say
"If my mind is all asplinter?!"

But fortunately I hear the calls
Of laughter on the ground
And flutter my way through the air
Toward the comical sounds.

Good thing for me my eyes are
Attached firmly to my head
Otherwise I'd have never seen
Where I had been led.

There lay a brain on the ground
Someone had not taken.
I would have wondered if it were mine
But, my mind had been forsaken.

Everyone around here has a brain
So this one must belong to me, and
Still everyone stood laughing
At my mentality.

I scooped the thoughts up in my hand
With all the brain debris.
And popped them back into place
At my own decree

I guess I could have walked away
And left my mind unclaimed
But at my own craziness,
I am not ashamed

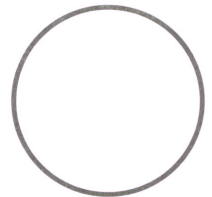
Short Fiction

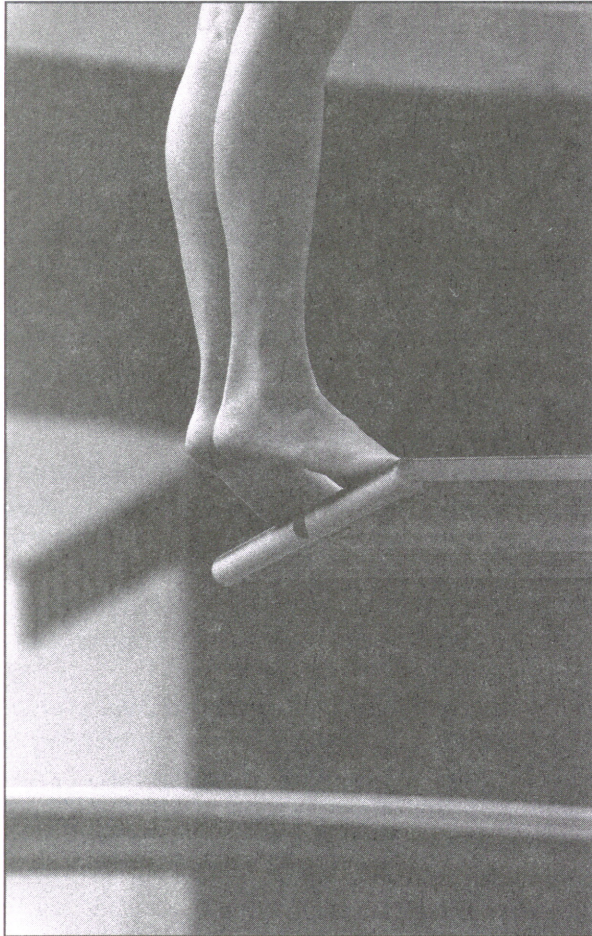
by Samuel Ward

It was a beautiful night. No, it was a perfect night. The last rays of the autumn sunset gently spread a soft orange hue across the still lake. The air was cool with a hint of the winter to come. It was going to be a cold one this year, I thought to myself.

I sat parked on a low hill in my old station wagon. How many memories had we made in this car? The many family vacations, the trip to Disneyland, it all seemed so trivial now. At the time, the eight hour trip was like Hell. How many times had I threatened to turn the car around? A tear rolled from my eye. My second son had been conceived in this car. The warm memories brought a smile to my face and tore at my heart.

I rolled up the window to close out the world. The car was getting cold and the whisky warm. I searched my thoughts one last time. There was nothing... nothing I could do. The plant had shut down, economic prosperity my a**. What could I, a forty seven year-old man, do? I had been working at the same job for over thirty years. I had no skills, no help; the whole town was broke ... no options. One option, my only option- I had to protect my family. The whiskey burned my throat. I bit back the tears. What the hell, I sobbed, I cried like a baby. It didn't matter anyway. I took another drink. I had life insurance: 750 thousand dollars worth. Hell, I even had car insurance. I only hoped this would help Jack, little Johnny, and my wife Sara. I only hoped God would forgive me, as my car slowly rolled down the soft slope into the cold, dark water.





Untitled

by Israel Holby

Garden Chair

by Sophorn Kuoy



Chance *Flashback Fiction Spring 1978*

by Fred Donovan Hill

I was walking down a path by a field of green corn when I saw it. It was a head floating in the air, about cornstalk high. Just a head. No body. It was, of course, amazing. Yet somehow, it was not especially horrifying. It was not like the head of the Green Giant that Gawain and the others gaped at. It was a balanced, unbloody, medium-sized, and moderately handsome, apparently-human head. It had thin, well-shaped lips, an aquiline nose, and sparse brown eyebrows and hair. It could have been another Southerner I'd met in a corn field if it had had a trunk and arms and legs and feet to walk on beside me. Instead, it hovered quietly by the path and then spoke.

"Don't be frightened. I don't mean you any harm."

"Good," I said.

"You are, of course, surprised?"

"Yes. What are you doing here?"

"We usually try to approach a person in a quiet, pleasant place like this. When he or she is alone — but in the open daylight. We find him or her more receptive in such a setting."

"I'm not the first, then?"

"Oh, no, we've given others the chance you're going to have."

"What *chance* is that?"

"A chance to enter the future."

"I should have thought that is what we are doing anyway — at each moment."

"You are a philosopher, good."

"You *like* philosophers?"

"Yes, we like a person who is curious, open to adventure, and concerned about the future."

"I'm not sure I'm 'open to adventure.' It depends."

"You seem like a likely prospect for what we have to offer."

"All right. But, again, why?"

"Do you believe in anything with the same strength and certainty that you believe you are standing here talking to me?"

"I don't believe anything as strongly as I believe I'm standing here, but . . ."

"That's good enough. Come with me, please."

The head started moving down one of the rows of corn and soon we were deep among the flapping green tassels and far into the field. As the head moved, I could see even in the sunlight and more so in the

shadows of the tall corn that it emitted a soft, quick flash of light on and off again like a firefly. I had to run to keep up with the head and it occurred to me that perhaps it flashed on and off to make certain I continued to see it. Soon my khaki shirt and pants were clinging to me from my sweat and my heavy work boots clumped against the hard ground. The head had no body to hold it back. I would have called to it to slow down, but I was ashamed.

We came to a small spot of uncultivated land. Hidden like the baby Moses, a circular machine no more than five feet in diameter lay among the tall, thick weeds.

"We always land in a spot like this," the head explained. "We have no wish to damage crops—or to alarm anyone."

There were in the machine five transparent compartments, two empty, three containing heads similar to the one that had led me there.

"Is there another of you out on an errand?" I asked.

"No, the empty compartment is for you—if you choose to come with us."

"It appears rather small for me."

"We can take care of that."

"Here?"

"Yes."

I began to feel a little sick. I started to spin around and run back through the corn field. But fascination was still stronger than fear.

"What would happen to my body?" I asked.

"Let's just say you would be placed here and now into a transcendent state. The body—your body—would no longer be needed. We offer you an exalted life: purely mental, spiritual, and aesthetic, beyond all bodily passions and pains. We offer you serenity in a vastness. Serenity in eternity."

I looked down at the two-feet-wide compartment and pondered "serenity in a vastness. Serenity in eternity."

"Try to overcome your natural squeamishness," the head began again. "Project yourself beyond your mortal, physical condition. Don't let it master you. In a moment—with your consent—you can be beyond such concerns forever. You can be the future."

I blinked hard and mumbled something incomprehensible, unremembered.

Again the head sought to persuade me: "Think of it this way. We can offer you the peace and tran-

scendence promised for centuries here on earth by all the great religions. We can give you something like Beatitude or Nirvana or Satori but without all the personal strain and dismal renunciation required by the religions which hold out those ideals of being."

My mind clicked through a turnstile into its past. "Is it because I was once involved in Vedantic and then in Catholic mysticism? Is that the reason you chose me for this offer?" I asked the head.

"That is one reason," it said.

"Then you do research your subjects before approaching them? Before giving them this *chance*?"

"Oh, yes."

"I'm afraid you concentrated too much on my early life. I was not quite twenty when I was—as they say now—'into' Vedanta and studying St. John of the Cross and contemplating the far reaches of the 'perennial philosophy'. I've slid a long way from those early efforts to reach a kind of purity. I'm as common now as the soil you see here," I said, looking down at the red-gold earth in the beginning sunset. "I'm as rooted in this earth as the corn growing here."

"We can fix that," the head countered. "Once a person has shown a serious inclination towards transcendence, we can take care of the rest."

"By eliminating the body?"

"Yes."

"By lifting him beyond this world and its concerns?"

"Yes."

"By transporting him above the merely but fully human?"

"Correct. By *deincarnation*."

"*Deincarnation*?"

"Yes, its easy. And you will find it so."

I looked up at a nearby hillside. There was the plum orchard where Daisy and I had once walked, where we sat and talked and sang, and ate and drank, and even made love on a red quilt there under the plum trees. I suddenly re-experienced the whole thing: the hot earth beneath us felt through the quilt, the sweet but acrid odor of bursted plums all over the ground, the tiny drops of sweat at the edge of her auburn hair, the green leaves flying against a deep blue sky that seemed to be melting over us . . .

"I've decided I can't go with you," I surprised myself by saying.

"But why?" the head asked.

"There are some things I can't explain to you—because you don't have a body," I said, feeling rather ridiculous.

"Please try."

"Its just that . . . well, I appreciate this chance you've give me. I don't disdain the kind of experience and knowledge you've offered. I want to know more about it. But I must try to know those things—if at all—as a fully *human* being, from some kind of wholeness, even out of my own sinfulness."

"Sin is an archaic conception for us."

"It will never be for us," I said.

"But what is really holding you here? Your wife is dead. You have no children."

"True. But I still have a duty to myself To my self as I believe God made it. I have to follow out that divine destiny—not trade it for some artificial solution like yours."

"You will continue to suffer much."

"Yes, and to enjoy much. Both out of my own being."

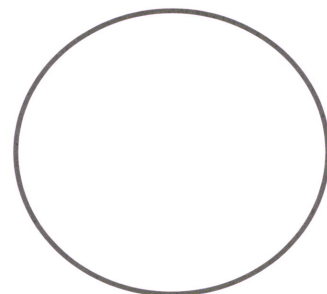
"From the standpoint of the future, you are a fool. I say this simply as a matter of fact."

"Yes, but perhaps your future is not forever. I believe I shall be ultimately right."

"Then goodbye to you. You will get no further chance."

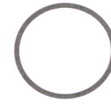
"Good. And goodbye to you."

One of the empty compartments flew open and the head entered it. Without noise, and without any visible means of propulsion, the machine rose quickly and ascended with great speed. It went up through the darkening ribs of the sunset. Leaving the world's body, too, I thought. I stood and watched the machine rise until it was out of sight. Then I stood there quietly for several minutes more, rooted and growing with the corn.



The Field

by Byron Bodie Pickens



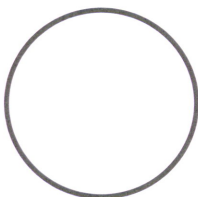
I carry myself to the middle of that field
With dusty bluejeans and all, I stand still
Watching the sun part from over the hill
Cracking a grin with my hands on my hips
Such scenic beauty handles my heart with a gentle grip

The sun sends down one last glare to my face
With it, the field is transformed by the rays
Staring into the horizon, it portrays a silk golden lace
My soul is satisfied by nature's taste
As the night creeps forth I catch one last glare of this place

I stroll back to my destination
Thanking the Lord for His lawless creation
Leaving here in a state of fascination
By instinct I bow my head thanking Him again for His making

I, myself, part from over the hill, awakened

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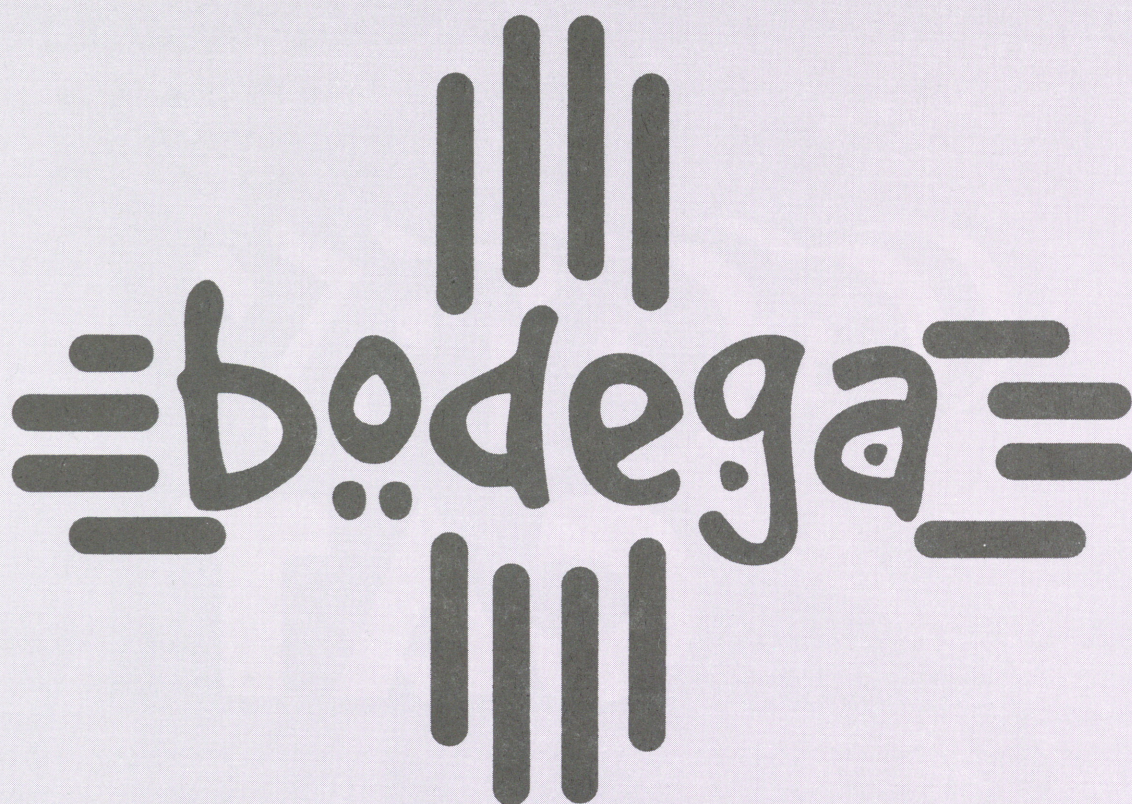
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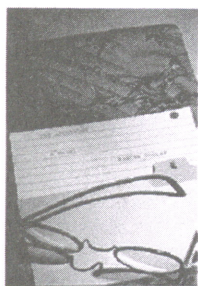


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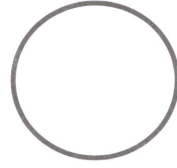
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Toward The Sunset Of Yesterday

by S.D. Hale



In the beginning God made man and he was good
And woman and she was good,
Better than good—perfect.
Yet, start with the best and you can't get better.
Start at the top and you can't rise, only fall.
Can't fall up, only down or round and round.
Not forward, just reverse.
Soon dizzy from going round,
We're falling backward through time,
From a perfect beginning toward the sunset of yesterday.

We're not making but un-making history,
In a long decline,
From a flawless creation toward dire degeneration,
From a lofty position to a lowly condition,
In a long retreat from a bright beginning toward a tragic end.
Not forward but backward,
Half running,
Half stumbling backward from the dawn to the sunset of yesterday.

We once fished in the river,
Bathed in the brook
And sipped from the stream.
From sea, land, and air,
Took only what we needed for survival.
But now for sport or for gaudy luxury we rape the earth,
Poison the waters,
Belch acid into the air
With our heads hanging down,
Hair dragging the ground,
Stumbling backward from the dawn toward the sunset of yesterday.

Once perfectly loving,
We hated no one,
Then one,
Then only a few at the time.
Now thanks to the marvels of instant misinformation,
We can be persuaded to hate thousands instantly,
Yea millions with little or no effort.
We're moving in reverse with bald bottoms in the air,
Heads hanging down,
Hair dragging the ground,
Stumbling backward from the dawn toward the sunset of yesterday.

Once perfectly civil we killed no one,
Then one,
Next tens, hundreds.
Back we went,
Down we went,
Down we go, faster.
Can't raise Abel nor un-raise Cain.
From Saul's thousand to David's ten thousand,
With the jawbone of an ass
Or with an asinine jawbone we send our proxies to kill.
Just lift a finger and millions will die.
From heaven to hell.
No white robes, no golden crowns.
Just bald bottoms in the air,
Heads hanging down,
Hair dragging the ground,
Stumbling backward from the dawn toward the sunset of yesterday.

Missiles and anti-missiles like giant sabers,
Flashing, clashing in the desert sky,
Wielded by midgets.
Anonymous arms probing,
Penetrating, slashing, bashing, crashing with the roar of thunder,
Defending, attacking, maiming, blinding, killing.
No peace, no victory.
No white robes, no golden crowns.
Bald bottoms in the air, heads hanging down,
Hair dragging the ground,
Stumbling backward from the dawn toward the sunset of yesterday.

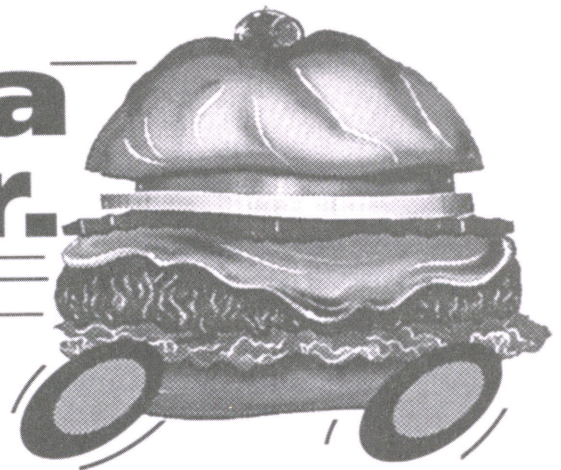


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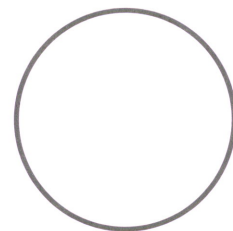
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The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew pearled
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

—R.Browning
Pippa Passes



A Day at the Office

by Lorie Grimes

Norman Cleber sat at his desk in a dank little corner office on the 11th floor of the Bale University Administrative and Financial Building, sweating profusely and wanting to die. His reddened elbows made two indentions on the thick mounds of papers scattered on the desk, and his fingers, stretched to the white knuckles, pressed hard at his temples and pulled at his greased, thinning hair. He stared at the closed office door, only a few feet away in this tiny box-like space. He fully anticipated Mr. Slone, his boss, to come bursting through the imitation oak door and, with the fluorescent lights above casting reflections off of his bald pate, open his mouth like a fat dragon to give birth to a sound, a rumble that could hardly be called human...

"GrrRR Cleber! Where's the Madox file? The budget proposals? My pastrami on rye? I asked for it ten minutes ago, and they aren't on my desk yet? We don't need your slacking kind around here...", followed by a slur of incomprehensible profanities.

The force of his emulations would be strong enough to make the tall, neat stacks of files and papers balanced tediously on the edge of the desk wobble and jitter until they very nearly threatened to rain onto the worn, oatmeal-colored carpet in a grand cascade. The thought made Norman nervous and he reached out to touch them caressingly to make sure they were still there, untouched. But it would be the final exclamation point, the slamming door as Mr. Slone stormed out at the end of his outraged, but methodical spiel, that would be enough to jar Norman's heart silent.

Norman let his hands fall like dead things onto the layer of paper on the desk. He sighed heavily, something difficult to do in the stagnant air of the 11th floor cube. He swiveled around in his creaky chair, and jiggled the knob of the radiator slash air conditioner, but it only swung loosely on the broken control. The heat in the Administrative Building always rose the top, and somehow, Norman often thought, cruelly gathered in his room, making his nose run and all the folders go limp.

He slammed a fist against the control panel with a grunt, and felt the blood rushing to his head in slow throbs. He rubbed at the fireballs in his eye sockets, only learning to relish the peaceful darkness in his own head when it was disrupted and broken by the shaft of sunlight invading his space, piercing

his blindness. He blinked hard several times before being convinced it was really there, illuminating the dust motes in the thick air around him. He followed the yellow ray to its origin: a mysterious point behind the gray steel filing cabinet, the one Norman referred to as Ol' Bessie. He moved closer to investigate.

Sure enough, a small window, 2ft x 2ft had been hidden away behind Ol' Bessie, unknown to him for almost twenty long, stuffy years. Norman jerked back in his spring-loaded chair, his cheeks flushing with unexpected guilt. He thought of Mr. Slone for a moment, and visions of his secret getting out. Norman was quite alarmed when he felt himself leaping from his seat and pressing the lock on the door in a single, easy motion. And he could only stare absently as his quick movement stirred the neat towers of papers and files on the desk, upsetting them to lean further, and dangerously further over the edge until the pages fluttered to the carpet in sleek arcs. Norman blinked.

He worked frantically. Ol' Bessie was heavy but he managed to move her away from the wall and up against the door. He felt like a young boy sneaking cigarettes out in the garage. Now he could see out of his window.

The view loosened him a bit. A crisp blue sky hung over the neat brick buildings of the university and the lush trees dotting between them. He could see busy people moving here and there across the pavilion- stop and go, stop and go.

But Norman's attention focussed on the university's Child Education and Daycare Center, a small building shaped like the cottages on the Swiss postcards he use to see when he was young. A playground was fenced in at the building's side, and ten children, looking like dots from Norman's altitude, raced around chasing an adult dot person.

The adult dot led them through the sandbox, up the wooden fort, down a slide, over the jungle gym, around a picnic table, and tried to throw them off course with a tetherball.

Norman watched in silence, fascinated. A feeling he was unaccustomed to began to pinch inside of him. He turned the locks at the window's corners with a screwdriver he found way back in the desk, and the window popped open on its long hinges. Fresh air forced its way into the room in a riot, sending every budget proposal, chart, and coffee stained memo into

a whirlwind around the room. The irritation in Norman's belly twisted its way into a solidified emotion.

The children dots would not be daunted. They kept the pursuit and followed exactly the path the adult dot took. Norman could almost imagine the clutches of chubby little hands on shirt tails when the children dots would nearly catch him. The wind blew up against Norman's face and moved his starched white collar up and down. He sucked in the cool air like it was a drug. The strange emotion had made its way into his brain. It was taking the place of Mr. Slone and the files, and twenty years of his life.

The adult dot finally gave up in exhaustion and stopped abruptly on the grassy part of the playground. The children surrounded him, and circled their prisoner. And then they pounced into his uplifted arms, wrapped around his legs, clung to his back,

until they all collapsed into a mass of tickles and silliness.

The emotion and reached his lips and threatened to explode through. Norman's eyes watered. He stared at the group below, watching them roll around in the grass. He could almost hear their bubbling . . .

Laughter. It penetrated his lips and was set free at last. He sat confused for a moment, unsure of this new thing coming from within, but got use to it quickly, and even began to enjoy it some. The laughter started as a deep grumbling, worked its way into a hearty chuckle, and finally turned into an unstoppable guffaw. It cracked the darkness and let the light pour in, it contorted his body in most pleasurable ways, and it drowned out Mr Slone's upsetting bangs on the door.

And suddenly, Norman could fly out there like one of those bubbles of laughter, far out over the trees.



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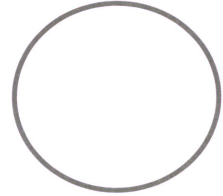
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My God, My King

by Chuck Huie

This world speaks of God with the understanding of a child. An infant boy will speak of the newfound wonders which surround him with the same understanding he has of his own birth. His thoughts are not ready, nor can his mouth compose, the wonderful mysteries of his strange new home. In this world, we are the same. Our words and thoughts can't recount His Greatness, we are only infants, for...



His splendor is greater than the deep canyon in the west,
and His power higher than the mighty mountains of the east.
He is much greater than great, much higher than high,
much bigger than big, and as deep as the deep.

His height is as high,
as the north, from the south,
and the heavens, continually
Shout for their King

But my words, are so poor. And simply aren't able,
to depict his majesty, and the wonder He wields.
He is the One True King, and Everlasting Father.
The Prince of Peace, and Mighty God.

His greatness is incomparable.
His Beauty, unimaginable.
His mind, unreasonable.
And his Name, Immeasurable.

He is my God my King, the Dayspring of Life
Loftier than the sky, and august as the night.
His wonder is dreadful, and His majesty ruthless,
His name is Precious, and His deeds are right.

He is Creator of All, and King of all Nature.
He stands on the clouds, and throws down the thunder.
He stretches to the heavens, and lights the stars.
He speaks to the air and cools the dawn.

My God is The Shepherd,
The Bishop of Souls.
Jehovah, King of All,
The Light of the World.

But these words are just infants,
mere shadows of Glory.
They dwell in the dark
as speechless as night.

But He gives us His name
And tells of His glory,
Jesus, the Son
Of the Most High and Holy.

His Name is Immanuel,
with us forever,
love without end,
My God and my King.



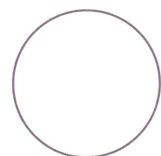


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